

BEL:EST. A LABORATORY FOR EUROPE IN BRUSSELS*Estonian and Belgian architects working on how to improve the city of Brussels**Workshop & exhibition in Estonia and Belgium*

Year	2017
Workshop location	Brussels (summer 2017)
Exhibition locations	Tallinn Design & Architecture Gallery (Tallinn Architecture Biennale 2017) - sept./oct. 2017 Brussels (BOZAR museum) - nov./dec. 2017
Teams of Offices	AgwA (BEL) & b210 (EST) LASSA (BEL) & PART (EST) L'escaut (BEL) & KAOS (EST) Delmulle Delmulle (BEL) & Arhitekt Must (EST) Bogdan&Van Broeck (BEL) & salto (EST)
Exhibition organiser	Aet Ader (b210) Iwan Strauven (BOZAR)
Scenography	Karli Luik (Kontekst)
Production	Eesti Arhitektuurikeskus (Architecture Estonian Center)
Collaboration	WBA

Estonian and Belgian architects working on how to improve the city of Brussels

In April 2017, architects from 5 Estonian and 5 Belgian architecture offices take a deep dive into a number of urban design and architecture problems that the city of Brussels faces every day. The issues they explore were selected using expertise from Belgian as well as Estonian side. The architects look at how to improve the security of critically important buildings in the city, how urban planning and architecture could support a more coherent society, how a more digital society might change the physical city around us, etc. The conclusions and solutions – site-specific to locations in Brussels – offered by the five teams of architects will form the core of an exhibition titled “BEL:EST A Laboratory for Europe in Brussels”.

The exhibition will be opened during the Tallinn Architecture Biennale TAB 2017 in Estonia, September 2017. After that, the exhibition will travel to Brussels, BOZAR, to present the case studies and spatial proposals to the Brussels’ public, opening on the 23rd of November, 2017. The exhibition is curated by Aet Ader (b210), produced by BOZAR and Estonian Centre of Architecture, and dedicated to the Estonia 100 centenary celebrations and Estonia’s Presidency of the Council of the European Union.



Europe's Common Ground addresses the symbolic deficit of the European institutions and of the European project in the city of Brussels and in the society. To many, in the stones of its buildings and in the nature of its processes, Europe has become a merely technocratic monster.

Indeed, the buildings hosting the European offices, and particularly the European neighbourhood in Brussels, are nothing else than just some more offices and districts anywhere in the world. Europe's buildings seem to be disconnected from the city.

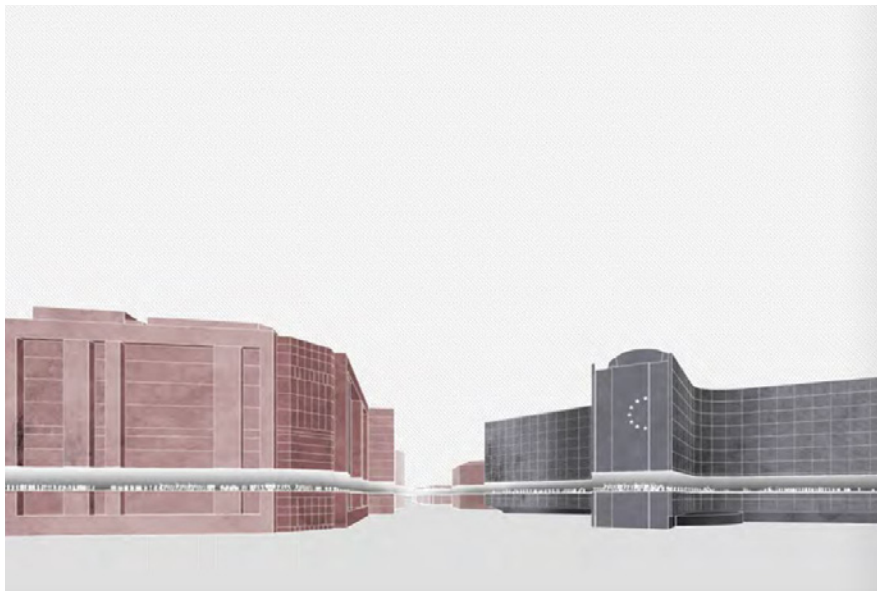
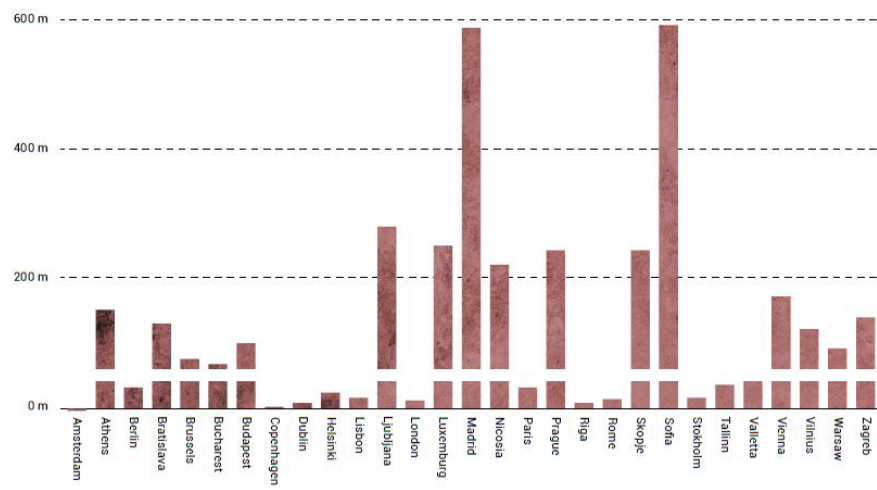
Europe produces an absurd amount of regulations, standards, decisions, studies and laws. Regulation No 2257/94, defining the curvature of bananas, seems an almost absurd allegory of this disconnection from society.

"Europe's Common Ground" turns these two blatant weaknesses into exhilarating strengths. It transforms them into a positive proposal of openness for and by the people.

However, throughout history, the universality of standards has contributed to the enhancement of exchange and better communication. Common standards and rules open the way for a new living together. Are there better examples than the Roman coins allowing trade, the meter in France founding the International System of Units, or the Greenwich meridian situating you anywhere on earth? Interestingly, all these standards have a strong, visual, symbolic representation in daily life, like the International Atomic Time running the clock of your smartphone, a meter of marble in a narrow street in Paris, the coins in your pocket and the threshold of a door in the southeast of London.

Recently, Europe defined a common "zero level" for all European countries — a small stone in Amsterdam known as the NAP (Normaal Amsterdams Peil). Quite useful for landing airplanes and ships navigating shallow waters! Estonia was related to the Russian zero level. Will NAP let the highest Estonian mountain grow or shrink? Will the Mont Blanc get taller or the Mediterranean Sea deeper? "Europe's Common Ground" (EGC) proposes an alternative to NAP. Being a European regulation, EGC is the result of elaborated negotiations and complex statistics. The average altitude of the member states, their population and surface, ingenious weighting factors, complementary projections of the surface of the earth, variations of the sea level and geotectonic movements are integrated in a superb formula, giving birth to a virtual surface, cutting through the air, the cities and the countryside like the red laser level of a geometer building the architecture of tomorrow.

EGC is the opportunity to translate this new virtual zero level into new public spaces at the heart of Europe's many anonymous buildings. What if all European buildings would give back a floor to the public, situated on the same absolute level? Remove the facades and transform these interiors into new spaces for unexpectedness, diversity and appropriation!



At once, all the dull buildings of Europe's institutions, agencies and representations, made of glass and aluminium, situated anywhere in the continent and oversea, will become recognizable as such, sharing a positive message of openness and availability. They will be saying: "We are Europe", forming a large network, relating to each other, from Tallinn to Lisbon and from Athens to Brussels. They will root the common level, "Europe's Common Ground", and with it all the technical work on regulations and standards, into daily life through debates and picnics, through gatherings, concerts and exhibitions. In a word, through democracy, as the possibility offered by a common language.



01



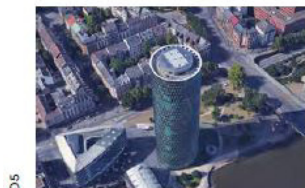
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01
Headquarters of the European Commission (Berlaymont)
Brussels, Belgium
Altitude: 62 m
Height of the building: 55 m
Floors: 14

02
European Parliament
Brussels, Belgium
Altitude: 60 m
Height of the building: 39 m
Floors: 13

03
Council of Europe
Strasbourg, France
Altitude: 141 m
Height of the building: 38 m
Floors: 9

04
European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA)
Cologne, Germany
Altitude: 44 m
Height of the building: 64 m
Floors: 11

05
European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA)
Frankfurt, Germany
Altitude: 95 m
Height of the building: 224 m

06
European Banking Authority (ABE)
London, United Kingdom
Altitude: 6 m
Height of the building: 438 m
Floors: 51

07
Agency for the Cooperation of Energie Regulators (ACER)
Ljubljana, Slovenia
Altitude: 296 m
Height of the building: 126 m

08
Satellite Center of the European Union (CSUE)
Torrejón de Ardoz, Spain
Altitude: 581 m
Height of the building: 15 m
Floors: 2

09
European Police Office (Europol)
The Hague, The Netherlands
Altitude: 6 metres
Height of the building: 30 to 76 m
Floors: 5 to 11

10
Translation Center for the Bodies of the European Union (CDT)
Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Altitude: 299 m
Height of the building: 31 to 77 m
Floors: 4 to 11

11
European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)
Parma, Italy
Altitude: 51 m
Height of the building: 78 m
Floors: 22

12
European Court of Auditors
Luxembourg, Luxembourg
Altitude: 333 m
Height of the building: 48 m
Floors: 13

